

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines outline principles that should be followed at Harvard Medical School in the writing and editing of multi-authored, multi-edited medical textbooks in which successive editions are customarily revised. It appears that there are no commonly accepted standards in the field of medical textbook writing, editing, and revising in regard to acknowledging the source of material retained from prior editions.

The textbook guidelines that follow are intended as a supplement to the Guidelines for Investigators in Scientific Research, issued in February 1988, which include principles for authorship practices in scientific papers. These guidelines are intended to provide general principles for behavior and not to be absolute rules.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Although shared with the current authors of a textbook, the ultimate responsibility for selection of an appropriate form of attribution remains within the discretion of the editor.
2. Whenever plans are being made to revise a textbook, it is the responsibility of the editor to notify each contributor to the prior edition and establish the nature and extent of the prior contribution. Such notice should be made whether or not the individual's participation will be sought for the revised edition. The notice should include any expected retention of the prior contributor's work in the new edition and the anticipated attribution, if any, of the prior contributor. Such notice serves not only as an act of courtesy and collegiality but also helps prevent misunderstandings about the role of the individual in both the former and the new editions.
3. Attribution of contributions from a prior edition of a textbook should be acknowledged by name, title and address when the prior contribution to the current work is identifiable. Appropriate acknowledgment can usually be made in the form of a footnote, but if the previous author actually participated in the rewriting or attendant scholarship involved in the preparation of the current edition or if the contribution of the previous author accounts for a significant identifiable portion of the current edition, the editor should include the prior contributor as an author of the current edition.
4. Editors of medical textbooks are responsible for maintaining academic standards of scholarship and proper attribution in accordance with these guidelines despite the fact that the publisher rather than the editor or author owns the copyright. The responsibility should not be abdicated to the publisher. Editors should reach a prior agreement with the publisher that academic standards of attribution will be followed.

Adopted on September 22, 1993